

CHAPTER 5 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The consultation and coordination process described in this section was developed primarily to ensure compliance with MFSA. The MFSA public and agency scoping process is described in Section 5.2 and in Volume I-C, Appendix G. The process of coordinating with agencies regarding cultural and biological resources is described in Section 5.3. Tribal consultation efforts required by MFSA are described in Section 5.4.

5.2 PUBLIC AND AGENCY SCOPING PROCESS

MFSA Sections 3.3(2) and 3.7(6) a-d state that public attitudes and concerns will be assessed with regard to potential project-specific impacts and also outline more specific requirements regarding this assessment. A detailed public and agency scoping summary report with exhibits is included in Volume I-C, Appendix G. The sections that follow (5.2.1 through 5.2.5) provide a synopsis of the information presented in Volume I-C, Appendix G.

Even though compliance with MFSA was a primary consideration in planning and implementing public and agency scoping, NorthWestern decided that the scoping process should include residents, elected officials, and agencies in both Montana and Idaho. Consequently, NorthWestern conducted an extensive outreach and communication effort in both states in 2007 and 2008. Activities include:

- Meetings held with federal, state, and local agencies; elected officials; and other stakeholders;
- Informal open houses allowing members of the public to meet with project team members one-on-one to discuss the latest project information;
- Posting project information on the Internet at www.msti500kv.com;
- Issuing press releases and legal notices; and
- Mailing a newsletter to individuals and other parties having an interest in the project.

The federal and Montana state environmental review process under MEPA and NEPA will provide the public in both states with additional opportunities for involvement and for submitting comments.

One of the initial tasks of the scoping process was NorthWestern's mailing of scoping letters to federal, state, and local agencies and elected officials in June and July 2007. Recipients included state and regional offices of the BLM, USFS, USACE, USFWS, Reclamation, DOE, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Montana and Idaho Governors' Offices and Congressional delegations, MDEQ, MDNRC, MFWP, MHS, Montana Department of Commerce, MDT, Montana Trust Land Management Division, IDEQ, IDL, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, IDWR, IDFG, ISHS, ITD, and officials of potentially affected counties in Idaho and Montana.

5.2.1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Public Open Houses were held in 11 cities in 2007 and 2008, six in Montana (Whitehall, Townsend, Ennis, Dillon, Anaconda, and Butte) and five in Idaho (Arco, Idaho Falls, Shoshone, Carey, and Aberdeen) (Table 5-1). Attendance lists are included in Volume I-C, Appendix G.

Table 5-1 Public Open Houses in Montana and Idaho

Location	Date	Attendance
MONTANA		
Whitehall, Jefferson County	June 19, 2007	20
Townsend, Broadwater County	June 20, 2007	20
Ennis, Madison County	June 21, 2007	19
Dillon, Beaverhead County	June 26, 2007	17
Anaconda, Deer Lodge County	August 6, 2007	33
Butte, Silver Bow County	April 16, 2008	32
	SUBTOTAL	141
IDAHO		
Arco, Butte County	August 7, 2007	13
Idaho Falls, Bonneville County	August 8, 2007	7
Shoshone, Lincoln County	August 9, 2007	11
Carey, Blaine County	November 27, 2007	64
Aberdeen, Power County	November 28, 2007	11
	SUBTOTAL	108
TOTAL		249

The Open House meeting format used for the MSTI project is a well established format for distributing information, discussing issues on a face-to-face basis, and soliciting comments and issues important to meeting attendees.

The Open Houses were announced in legal notices published in local newspapers and in additional advertisements in the same newspapers. Meeting places and dates were also posted on the project website.

Prior to each Open House, informational materials were developed for use as handouts (e.g., a project fact sheet), for conducting media briefings and for advertising.

The meetings were arranged in a walk-through presentation with stations located throughout the viewing corridor. Each station included one or more presentation boards as well as opportunities to give verbal comments, which were written on a flip chart by a team member. Comments could also be written on comment forms turned in at the meeting or mailed later. In addition, an interactive GIS was used that allowed attendees to view a detailed map or aerial photograph to determine the location of an alternative route link in relation to the location of a specific feature or parcel of concern. Verbal comments could then be incorporated into the GIS and referenced to a specific location on the project map.

The stations and presentation boards were arranged as follows:

Welcome

1. Welcome – Public Open House

Purpose and Need

2. Purpose, Need and Benefit
3. Project Description
4. How Electricity is Delivered
5. Project Timeline

Engineering

6. Construction Sequence
7. Typical Structure Type
8. 500kV Transmission Structures
9. What about EMF?
10. Right-of-Way Acquisition

Environment

11. Route Alternatives Development
12. Environmental Review Process
13. Environmental Studies
14. Preliminary Issues
15. Decision Factors for Evaluating Alternatives

Interactive GIS

16. Opportunities for Public Involvement

5.2.2 ELECTED OFFICIAL BRIEFINGS

Elected official (usually County Commission) briefings were held in each Montana and Idaho county crossed by one or more alternative route links (Table 5-2). Briefings were also presented to elected officials in the cities of Anaconda, Deer Lodge and Lima in Montana. The first round of briefings was held in 2007, and a second round of briefings was completed in July 2008. The second round followed the identification of a Preferred Route by NorthWestern.

Table 5-2 Elected Official Briefings in Montana and Idaho

Location	Round 1 Date	Round 2 Date
MONTANA		
Broadwater County (Townsend)	June 11, 2007	June 9, 2008
Jefferson County (Boulder)	June 12, 2007	June 17, 2008
City of Butte-Silver Bow County	June 13, 2007	June 18, 2008
Madison County (Virginia City)	June 18, 2007	June 10, 2008
City of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County	June 22, 2007	June 10, 2008
Beaverhead County (Dillon)	June 26, 2007	June 16, 2008
City of Deer Lodge	June 28, 2007	--
City of Lima	November 26, 2007	June 9, 2008
IDAHO		
Clark County (Dubois)	August 1, 2007	July 14, 2008
Bonneville County (Idaho Falls)	August 14, 2007	July 29, 2008
Bingham County (Blackfoot)	August 15, 2007	July 8, 2008
Minidoka County (Rupert)	August 20, 2007	July 7, 2008
Jerome County (Jerome)	August 21, 2007	June 24, 2008
Power County (American Falls)	September 10, 2007	July 28, 2008
Lincoln County (Shoshone)	September 10, 2007	July 28, 2008
Butte County (Arco)	September 24, 2007	June 23, 2008
Jefferson County (Rigby)	September 24, 2007	June 23, 2008
Blaine County (Hailey, Carey)	October 9, 2007	July 15, 2008

The purpose of the briefings was to keep elected officials informed about the planning process (e.g., status, elements of the project, and steps in the process). The format for the briefings was for NorthWestern and its consultant, POWER, to give a 15-to-30-minute presentation during a regular session of a County Commission meeting. Prior to the briefings, a fact sheet was presented to each commissioner and to other interested parties at the meeting. A small-scale (1:400,000) map of the MSTI project area was used to illustrate possible route alternatives. Each briefing began with a brief presentation of the project's purpose and need, the project description, the MFSA process, and the MEPA/NEPA environmental review process, with time allowed afterwards for questions and answers.

5.2.3 OTHER PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Public communication tools were also used to elicit public comments, including:

- Media contacts
- A project website
- A project mailing list
- A newsletter

5.2.3.1 Media Contacts

A variety of press releases and public meeting notices with fact sheets were used to announce the MSTI project. Interviews were also conducted with the press.

One press release was made prior to each of the Public Open Houses. These were issued to local newspapers, television, and radio outlets in Montana and Idaho. Public service announcements were also issued to air on local television and radio stations.

5.2.3.2 MSTI Website

NorthWestern established a project website (www.msti500kv.com) that contained information, maps, and other data specific to MSTI. Also, visitors to the website can complete on-line comment forms and e-mail them to NorthWestern. Information currently included on the website includes:

- About the Project
 - Project Overview
 - Benefits of MSTI
 - Options to Stay Informed
 - About NorthWestern Energy
- What's New
 - Current News
 - Open Season Information
 - Archived News by Data
- Routes/Maps
 - Alternative Routes
- Environmental Review
 - Review Process
 - EIS Process
 - Preliminary Issues
 - Environmental Studies
 - Open House Boards
- Project Design
 - Engineering Requirements
 - System Studies
 - Project Timeline
 - Open House Boards
- Public Outreach
 - Public Information
 - Open Houses
 - Elected Official Briefings
 - Public Outreach Completed
 - Open House Boards
 - Public Outreach Documents
 - Comment Form

The project website was launched in June 5, 2007 and its most recent redesign was on June 11, 2008. During the period from June 2007 through May 2008, there were 2,004 sessions and 123,140 hits.

The average was 154 sessions per month and 5.23 sessions per day. The average length of a session was 5.17 minutes. Of the 2,004 sessions, there were 1,116 unique visitors (i.e., some visitors visited the site more than once). A “session” is a series of hits to a site over a specific time period by a visitor. A “hit” is any successful request to a webserver from a visitor’s browser. The number of sessions is a better measure of website traffic than the number of hits because a single session by one visitor may include numerous hits.

5.2.3.3 Newsletter

A project newsletter was developed and mailed or emailed to the public and agencies on April 29, 2008 using the project mailing list (see Section 5.2.3.4). The newsletter, *MSTI Project Update*, contained information on:

- A brief description of the project.
- Purpose of the project.
- Benefits of MSTI.
- 2008 MSTI milestones and activities, including a project timeline.
- Milestones that occurred in 2007.
- Acronyms

A total of 442 newsletters were mailed out to individuals and agencies and 52 newsletters were e-mailed. A copy of the newsletter can be seen in Volume I-C, Appendix G.

5.2.3.4 Mailing List

A mailing list database was compiled to provide interested parties (via postal service and/or e-mail) information about the status of project planning, future meetings, and other project details. The mailing list has been updated regularly following Public Open Houses (Section 5.2.1), receipt of e-mailed comments from the project website (see Section 5.2.3.2), and other events at which individuals expressed interest in the project.

5.2.3.5 Other Comments Received

Apart from the comment forms and interactive GIS comments during open houses, elected official briefings, and agency meetings (see Section 5.2.4), a number of comments and issues were received in other ways:

- Website e-mails
- Mailed or faxed comment forms
- Mailed or faxed letters
- Mailed or faxed petitions
- Verbal comments recorded on flip charts during the open house meetings

5.2.4 AGENCY MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Individual or, where possible, joint agency meetings were held with federal, state, and a few local agencies in Idaho and Montana (Table 5-3). The format for agency meetings ranged from the briefing

style used with elected officials to formal presentations following a pre-determined agenda. Meeting summaries were prepared following each meeting. In addition, individual NorthWestern and POWER staff met with agency resource specialists to discuss technical or resource-specific issues. These one-on-one meetings are not included in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3 Agency Meetings in Montana and Idaho

Agency	Date
Federal Agencies	
BLM, Idaho State Office	September 13, 2007
BLM, Upper Snake Field Office	September 11, 2007
USFS, Helena National Forest	September 18, 2007
USFS, Helena National Forest	November 14, 2007
INL, DOE Idaho Operations Office	November 28, 2007
Montana State Agencies	
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP)	September 17, 2007
Interagency	
Helena Interagency Meeting BLM, Montana State Office, USFS, Northern Region, USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MDNRC), MFWP, Region 3	March 22, 2007
Butte Interagency Meeting BLM, Butte Field Office, USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, MFWP	September 17, 2007
Boise Interagency Meeting BLM, Idaho State Office, USFS - Region 4, USFS, Caribou- Targhee National Forest, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, USFWS, Idaho Office of Energy Resources (IOER), IDL, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), Idaho Department of Agriculture (IDA), Idaho Department of Water Resources (ISWR), IOSC	November 1, 2007
Helena Interagency Meeting USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, BLM, Montana State Office, MDEQ, MDNRC, Trust Land Management Division	November 14, 2007
Craters of the Moon Interagency Meeting NPS-Crater of the Moon National Monument, BLM, Shoshone Field Office	February 5, 2008
Twin Falls Interagency Meeting BLM, Idaho State Office, BLM, Shoshone Field Office, BLM, Burley Field Office, BLM Twin Falls District, NPD-Craters of the Moon National Monument, IDEQ	June 4, 2008
Butte Interagency Meeting BLM, Montana State Office, BLM, Idaho Falls District, BLM Butte Field Office, USFS Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, MDEQ	June 5, 2008

In addition to formal agency meetings, there were other communications with various agencies, primarily letters that addressed issues raised during the meetings or comments on the MSTI proposal. Agency correspondence from Montana and Idaho is listed in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Agency Communications in Montana and Idaho

Agency	Date	Format
FEDERAL AGENCIES		
BLM, Montana State Office	June 26, 2007	Letter
BLM, Butte Field Office	July, 2007	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office	July 9, 2007	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office	July 11, 2007	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office	February 19, 2008	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office	March 26, 2008	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office	March 27, 2008	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office	April 15, 2008	Letter
BLM, Shoshone Field Office	August 9, 2007	Open House Comment
BOR, Montana Area Office	July 5, 2007	Letter
BOR, Snake River Area Office	August 16, 2007	Letter
NPS, Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve	August 22, 2007	Letter
USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	July 5, 2007	Letter
USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	July 11, 2007	Letter
DOE, Idaho Operations Office	September 10, 2007	Letter
Idaho National Laboratory (INL)	August 30, 2007	E-mail
INL	September 5, 2007	Letter
USFWS, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office	August 15, 2007	Letter
MONTANA STATE AGENCIES		
MFWP	July 9, 2007	Letter
Montana Public Service Commission (MPSC)	September 14, 2007	Letter
MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENTS		
Town of Lima	January 14, 2008	Letter
IDAHO STATE AGENCIES		
IDEQ	August 13, 2007	Letter
IDFG	August 16, 2007	Letter
IDL	August 15, 2007	Letter
ISHS	August 16, 2007	Letter
ITD	August 1, 2007	Letter
IDAHO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS		
Blaine County Commissioners	January 15, 2008	Letter
Blaine County Planning/Zoning/Building Department	November 26, 2007	Letter
Clark County Economic Development Office	February 29, 2008	Letter
INTERAGENCY		
Sage Grouse Southwest Montana Local Working Group (BLM, USFS, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), MFWP, MDNRC)	September 14, 2007	Letter
BLM, Dillon Field Office with BLM, Butte Field Office, BLM, Upper Snake Field Office, Western Montana Resource Advisory Council (BLM, Butte Field Office),	December 10, 2007	Letter

Agency	Date	Format
USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, USFS, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, USFWS, Montana Ecological Services Field Office, USFWS, Eastern Idaho Field Office, MFWP, Region 3, IDFG, Upper Snake Region, Beaverhead County Commission		

5.2.5 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND ISSUES

Comments received during the six Public Open Meetings in Montana and five meetings in Idaho were submitted in writing on comment forms during or after the meetings, verbally at comment stations, digitally on interactive GIS forms, and by hand at the meetings (Table 5-5). A total of 105 comments were received during Open Houses in Montana, and 44 were received in Idaho.

In addition, 207 comments or questions were received from Montana residents via e-mail, fax, and through the mail. A large portion of these (166 out of 207) represent signatures on a petition opposing one alternative route link in the Hadley Park area in Montana. This petition is available in Volume I-C, Appendix G.

Table 5-5 Comments Received During Open Houses in Montana in Idaho

Location	Date	Comment Forms	Verbal	Interactive GIS	Hand- Delivered	Total
Montana						
Whitehall, Jefferson County	June 19, 2007	3	7	5	0	15
Townsend, Broadwater County	June 20, 2007	1	4	7	0	12
Ennis, Madison County	June 21, 2007	2	4	9	0	15
Dillon, Beaverhead County	June 26, 2007	1	13	11	0	25
Anaconda, Deer Lodge County	August 6, 2007	2	11	6	3	22
Butte, Silver Bow County	August 16, 2007	4	11	1	0	16
Subtotal		13	50	39	3	105
Idaho						
Arco, Butte County	August 7, 2007	3	2	5	0	10
Idaho Falls, Bonneville County	August 8, 2007	0	2	0	0	2
Shoshone, Lincoln County	August 9, 2007	0	2	2	1	5
Carey, Blaine County	November 27, 2007	4	11	2	0	17
Aberdeen, Power County	November 28, 2007	2	0	8	0	10
Subtotal		9	17	17	1	44
TOTAL		22	67	56	4	149

Comments received during and after Montana Open Houses are summarized below:

- Opposition to or support for specific alternative route links.
- Avoiding irrigation pivots.
- Concern about weeds.
- Concern about gates being left open.
- Wetlands.
- Proximity to Toston Dam.
- Proximity to the historic town of Radersburg.
- Proximity to subdivision developments.
- Protecting viewsheds.
- Protecting wildlife and preserving wildlife corridors.

- Elk, sage grouse, bald eagle, carnivores, golden eagle, falcon, sandhill crane, songbirds, bats, swans.
- A heron rookery.
- Native vegetation.
- Preserving open space, recreation resources, and private conservation easements.
- Parallel existing transmission lines.
- Protecting the local economy.
- Private airports.
- Need to review a revised Growth Management Plan.
- Property values.
- EMF.
- Acquisition and staging of fire equipment.

Comments received during Idaho Open Houses are summarized below:

- Opposition to or support for specific alternative route links.
- Proximity to highways and airports.
- Prefer DC over AC line.
- Avoid Craters of the Moon National Park.
- Avoid Lava Lakes area.
- Preference for using existing corridors.
- Antelope movement corridors.
- Recreation resources.
- Nature preserve near Silver Creek.

Elected officials in Montana had a total of 39 comments and questions during the elected official briefings held during the first round (a summary of comments is not yet available from the second round, completed in June 2008). The general topics of the comments received from Montana elected officials included:

- Location of the transmission line, connection points, substations and other project facilities.
- Whether a preferred route has been selected.
- Project timing.
- Relationship to other projects.
- Whether wind power will be able to tie in to the transmission line.
- The nature of wind in Montana.
- Financial impact to the county.
- Tax consequences.
- Effects on electric bills.
- Financial stability of NorthWestern.
- Source of funding.
- Stability and viability of the project.
- Mileage of transmission line within county.
- Interference with cell towers.
- Weed problems caused by access roads.
- Proximity of the project to subdivisions.

- EMF.
- Using garbage as a source of energy.

Sixty-seven (67) substantive questions and issues were raised by County Commissioners from 10 Round 1 briefings in Idaho (a summary of comments is not yet available from the second round, completed in July 2008). Specific comments and issues are summarized below.

- Location of the transmission line and connection points.
- Distance from other transmission lines.
- Can existing transmission line routes be followed?
- Can more lines be added to the structures?
- Effects on existing substations.
- Is there a preferred route?
- Mileage of transmission line within county.
- Source of energy.
- Can wind energy, nuclear and other projects tie in to the transmission line?
- Who are the end users?
- Is Idaho Power a participant in MSTI?
- Need for additional Open Houses.
- Dealing with landowners.
- Sage grouse.
- Avoid irrigation pivots.
- Crossing Idaho National Laboratory (INL).
- Crossing Indian reservations.
- Visual impacts on Craters of the Moon and Highway 20 scenic corridor.
- Appearance of towers.
- Tax consequences.
- Effects on electric bills.
- EMF.

A public and agency scoping process will also be performed following the initiation of the NEPA process for the MSTI project.

5.3 AGENCY CONSULTATION

5.3.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The MSTI project will be required to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the implementing regulations for Section 7 consultation. At the beginning of the NEPA process, the USFWS will be contacted to request species lists. Formal Section 7 consultation with the USFWS will begin with submittal of a biological assessment (BA) for appropriate species.

For the MFSA application, there have been meetings and other contacts by NorthWestern and POWER biologists with MFWP and other agency biologists regarding issues and concerns in the project area. This process was for information gathering and is not considered consultation.

5.3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The MSTI project will be required to comply with Section 106 of the NHPA. At the beginning of the NEPA process, formal Section 106 consultation will be initiated and meetings will be held with the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) at the Montana Historical Society (MHS), the Idaho SHPO at the ISHS, BLM, USFS, DOE, MDNRC, and other affected agencies to address the identification, evaluation, and protection of cultural resources. This process may include development of a Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the agencies, possibly the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), Northwestern, interested Native American groups, and other interested parties.

For the MFSA application, there have been meetings and other contacts by POWER archaeologists with staff of the MHS, MDEQ, MDNRC, MFWP, BLM, and USFS to obtain information on previously identified cultural resources, previous cultural resource surveys, areas considered sensitive for cultural resources, and appropriate procedures for documenting cultural resources in the study area. Similar contacts were made with staff of the ISHS, DOE, and other agencies in Idaho. This process is considered consultation under MFSA (3.7(14)(d)), but does not qualify as consultation as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

5.4 TRIBAL CONSULTATION

Under MFSA and as outlined in Circular MFSA-2, NorthWestern is required to delineate:

“sites that have or may have religious or heritage significance and value to Indians (3.4(1)(t));”

and to provide:

“documentation that consultation has occurred with the SHPO, affected state and federal agencies, or tribes regarding any affected cultural sites, impacts, and mitigation (3.7(14)(d)).”

In June 2008, NorthWestern sent letters to initiate MFSA consultation with several tribes in Montana. Letters were sent to tribal chairmen as well as Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO). The tribes contacted included:

Blackfeet Tribe
Browning, Montana

Chippewa Cree Tribe
Box Elder, Montana

The Crow Tribe of Indians
Crow Agency, Montana

Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes
Harlem, Montana

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Pablo, Montana

During the NEPA and Section 106 processes, tribal consultation will continue on a government-to-government basis and will include tribes in Montana, Idaho, and other states as appropriate.